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United Way not a 'sham'



MARYANNE FRITH/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

United Way of South Niagara executive director Tamara Coleman-Lawrie was surprised by the amount of feedback she received following an eyebrow-raising news release that highlighted what she calls the agency's negative perception in the community. See story on page A2.



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UPFRONT

■ **COMMUNITY:** Public reacts to bold statements by executive director

Agencies rally behind United Way

MARYANN FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Getting a conversation started in the community.

That was the intention of United Way of South Niagara executive director Tamara Coleman-Lawrie last Wednesday when she issued a news release that raised some eyebrows.

In the release, she stated that "too many people in our community think United Way is a sham" and that the organization was not receiving the support it requires to meet its fundraising campaign goal.

As a result, the community did start talking.

Coleman-Lawrie was surprised by the sheer volume of feedback, both positive and negative, that she received throughout the next day.

"There was a lot of support out there for us to try to be as bold and transparent as we could be," she said following an admittedly stressful day.

She received calls from other organizations, city councillors and businesses throughout south Niagara that both praised and panned her decision to address what she called a negative perception of the organization.

"There's a white elephant in the room. Let's start talking about it," Coleman-Lawrie said unapologetically, adding she's hopeful people will begin to see charities in a new and more

accurate light.

"We need to start having these conversations so people can evaluate the United Way based on its merits and financial records, not based on just what neighbour Joe said," she said.

Within 24 hours, Coleman-Lawrie said she was surprised by "people who are high-up in the community who were upset with me for clearing the air."

That negativity will only breed further negativity, she said.

"To the naysayers, pick up the phone and call me. Address it with me."

Coleman-Lawrie spent most of time at Thursday's meeting to comment on the original article on The Tribune's website.

"Our community members are talking, and when they do, we listen. It is my responsibility to respond," she said.

She felt it was an opportunity to dispel myths about the organization and share facts about what United Way does.

Local agencies among the more than 30 supported by the United Way also came to the organization's defence Thursday.

"We wouldn't be able to deliver the services we do without United Way funding," said Ruthann Brown, executive

director of Women's Place of South Niagara.

In 2014, Women's Place received \$46,000 to support, among others, a program that helps women escaping violence to navigate the family court system and issues such as custody.

"It's important that women have that service in order to transition to violence-free lives," Brown said, adding United Way makes that possible.

"It's distressing to see they're under such scrutiny, because they're integral to our community."

Brown was also disheartened by the misconception that much of the United

Way's funding goes toward staff costs.

All registered charities are looked at "under a microscope," she said.

"The finance reports are there to look at. Instead of making assumptions, it's better to be approached in that way."

Five weeks from the end of its campaign and the United Way has raised \$480,000 of its \$650,000 goal.

"If the United Way cannot meet its goal, the domino effect on other agencies will be significant," Brown said.

Niagara's economic climate has led to increased demand at most agencies and, in turn, has made the need for donations greater, she said.

She believes "donor fatigue" has begun to set, which has left some people feeling cynical and negative toward charities.

"We're hopeful the generous spirit of people will come through so we can continue to provide the supports needed."

Coleman-Lawrie expressed her appreciation for those who have contributed and continue to contribute to United Way.

"We're very grateful for our donations," she said, adding her news release

said executive director Barb Van Der Heyden.

"Not only does the United Way provide funds, she said, it also helps to promote Big Brothers throughout Niagara and has provided networking opportunities that have created valuable partnerships."

Last year, United Way contributed \$80,000 to programming at Port Cares.

"We put in a request for more this year, but recognize the United Way does as much as it can with what it has," said executive director Christine Clark Lafleur.

The struggling United Way is having meeting its campaign goal is "something we all take very seriously," she said.

"But it's the reality of the times. When it comes to the economy, we're not surprised."

Welland Mayor Frank Campion said he was surprised to learn United Way felt there was a negative perception of the organization in the community.

"They have a history of doing a good job and making sure funds are available to help charitable organizations," he said.

"They're good at what they do."

United Way has been providing funding to Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Niagara since the agency, which provides mentorship for youths, opened in 1990.

If Big Brothers lost that support, including \$65,000 provided in 2014, it would mean 65 less mentoring matches would be made,

said executive director Barb Van Der Heyden.

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Port Cares, she said, has "seen a 30% increase year over year in our food bank registrants," including a growing number of young women with children.

"They can appreciate the challenges the United Way is up against," Clark Lafleur said.

If the organization is not able to meet its campaign goal, it will have an impact on Port Cares' crisis services for clients and work at the Reach Out Centre food bank.

For more information on United Way of South Niagara or to make a donation, visit www.unitedwaysouthniagara.ca.



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LOCAL NEWS

■ BUSINESS: Fonthill warehouse to help meet housing contractors' demands

Habitat for Humanity opening second ReStore

DAN DAKIN
QMI Agency Niagara

Habitat for Humanity Niagara is opening a second ReStore.

The new ReStore facility that builds houses for families who couldn't otherwise afford them is taking over the former Wood Floor Depot building on Hwy. 20 in Fonthill.

The second ReStore, modelled closely after the original store on Bunting Rd. in St. Catharines, should be open by mid-March once renovations on the 10,000-square-foot warehouse are complete.

Habitat for Humanity moved into its current space in 2010. That location, at 150 Bunting Rd., has about 16,000 square feet of store and warehouse space.

Chief operating officer Keith Gowans said the store makes enough money to cover all of the agency's administrative costs each year. Additional fundraising covers the cost of building between three and five houses a year.

"But we recognize that's not enough. We need to build a lot more," Gowans

said.

The Bunting Rd. location has been so popular with contractors donating building materials that it was running out of space.

Rather than waiting a few more years to open a second store, as was the original plan, Gowans said they decided to move forward immediately.

"We always wanted to trigger a second store when we were bursting at the seams with the first store," he said. "The groundwork we laid with the partnerships from across the region is really paying off."

After the Wood Floor Depot closed, the Fonthill building became Beastics Home Improvement Clearance Center, which has since re-opened in Thorold.

Working with volunteers from Welland's Tucker Construction and several local contractors that often donate materials to the original ReStore, Habitat has undertaken a fairly extensive renovation of the building.

"We've opened up the building itself. We installed a beam to open the building from the warehouse to the store

and we're working with the landlord to install energy efficient lighting," Gowans said.

Once open, the Fonthill ReStore will have a similar selection of building material, supplies, kitchens and furniture.

"We can't order any product. We rely on the goodness of others, so we have to fill the store fully before we open," said Gowans.

The goal is to have the two stores generating enough revenue to build an additional two or three homes each year.

Habitat for Humanity is looking for volunteers for the new location to help with customer service, receiving and sorting, kitchen cabinet collection and other roles.

"We rely heavily on the goodwill of others donating their time," Gowans said.

Habitat is also looking for more contractors and renovators to donate material and inventory.

To get involved, phone 905-685-7395.

d.dakin@summedia.ca



DAN DAKIN/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Habitat for Humanity Niagara chief operating officer Keith Gowans stands in front of a new ReStore location opening on Hwy 20 in Fonthill in March.

■ COMMUNITY: Annual Lions event cancelled due to storm

Snow keeps Fenwick Flossie in hiding

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Fenwick Flossie stayed nestled in her burrow Monday as heavy snow blanketed Niagara.

Pelham's favourite oversized groundhog was expected to emerge at Centennial Park for her annual weather prediction at 9:30 a.m., but due to the inclement weather the event was cancelled by the hosting Fenwick Lions.

The event, which was cancelled in 2011 after a snowstorm hit the region,

Hundreds of local elementary school students were bused in for the event every year to visit with Flossie and enjoy some treats served up by the Lions.

But the closure of local schools Monday and cancellation of school bus services mean no way for children to safely make their way to the park, Lions treasurer Tim Crowther said.

Once the schools reopened and the Lions had an opportunity to discuss the event's cancellation, it was to be decided whether it would be held at a later date, he said.

Typically, it is not rescheduled.

"We'll talk about what we can do at our meeting Wednesday," Crowther said, while adding the Lions have "tons



VICTORIA GRAV / QMI AGENCY NIAGARA FILE PHOTO
Fenwick Flossie.

of cookies and hot chocolate" that were waiting for local youths to indulge in.

"It's really good thing out of all of this is that Flossie didn't see her shadow," he said with a laugh.

"That means we're getting an early spring."

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Niagara Peninsula Energy Inc. CEO & President Brian Wilkie, Chief Conservation Officer Sue Forcier & Mayor Jim Diodati unveiled the wrapped Niagara Transit Bus as it is rolling out the word on how customers can do and save more with Niagara Peninsula Energy's saveOnenergy programs.

"We are looking to get our customers engaged, so they can be important participants in creating a culture of conservation – do more, save more" says CEO & President Brian Wilkie.

The green wrapped bus showcases local businesses that participated in the various saveOnEnergy programs and information to access the full slate of saveOnEnergy conservation programs.



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Peter Conradi, WEB EDITOR

Thinking of and thanking Pelham firefighters

DAVE AUGUSTYN
 For PelhamNews

Hearing a siren of any type in our town makes us think immediately of the person needing help.

Is it a family member or friend whose vehicle has flipped over? Are they headed for our neighbour down the street who has heart problems?

And then, because they are usually first on the scene of an emergency, council and I think about the safety of our dedicated Pelham firefighters.

As you may know, when some-

one calls 911 with a medical call, fire call or general emergency, regional dispatch pages Pelham volunteer firefighters. The dedicated men and women drop whatever they are doing with their families or at work and immediately head to the fire hall. (As you can imagine, this can be especially stressful for and demanding on their families.)

Once they get to the fire hall, they jump into their bunker gear, run to the appropriate fire rescue vehicle and drive to the emergency. While it's difficult to drive one of the large fire vehicles normally, it's even more

of a challenge to drive one in an emergency.

How do our firefighters know what to do? How do they prepare?

They train every week — week in and week out — to practise with the equipment, including out the hoses and spraying down a target, to stabilizing and cutting open old vehicles to practising using the Laws of Life. They practise putting on their breathing apparatuses and searching for victims in a smoke-filled room.

Other times they check and fix equipment or learn the latest techniques in a classroom setting then they try it hands on. Other

times, they stage mock disasters — like a tanker truck hitting a school bus — and involve all three fire stations and the police service and Niagara EMS.

And, while I am not doing it just now, I do practise, and practise and practise for every type of emergency.

Many members of our fire service also attend Ontario Fire College for specific courses based on Ontario Fire Service Standards; this includes officer training and instruction. It's great that our volunteer firefighters take advantage of the programs and courses so that they can continue

to be among the best-trained and most professional members of the Ontario fire services.

Many Pelham firefighters have served the community for five, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and even 35 years. That is an amazing dedication and service.

On your behalf, I express my deep appreciation for the dedication, commitment, sacrifice and hard work of each of the more than 85 part-time firefighters in Pelham.

You may contact Mayor Dave at mayordave@pelham.ca or read past columns at www.pelhammayordave.blogspot.ca.

Shipwrecks — Atlantic Water

SKYL GILLHAM
 For QMI Agency Niagara

The Atlantic Water was flying to fish the oceans when it came to the Great Lakes for a single trip in 1959.

The Second World War vintage Liberty Ship had been built at Houston, Texas, and completed in October 1944 for the United States Maritime Commission as *Richard J. Hopkins*.

The 134.6-metre-long freighter carried war, and then peace time, cargoes before being sold and registered in Panama as *Atlantic Water* in 1951. It had visited the oceans of the world before it made its single trip to the Great Lakes.

A sale to Greek interests in 1961 resulted in a new name of *Koumotsissa* and it then became *Agia Eriini L.* two years later for the Horizon Navigation Co. of Liberia.

On Feb. 3, 1964, *Agia Eriini L.* encountered heavy weather on the Pacific while carrying scrap steel from Portland, Ore., to Kawasaki, Japan. Hull fractures and leaks developed in the wake of the pounding seas and the ship went down about 965 kilometres southeast of Yokohama, Japan. Miraculously, all of the crew were rescued.



Atlantic Water, in an undated photo.

DAN MCCORMICK/QMI AGENCY

Niagara Regional council goes paper-light

BRIAN BATTY
For QM Agency Niagara

There was a time in my past where I excelled at the implementation of new technologies. The IBM PC was created in 1981 and in 1985 I spearheaded a move to transform the way local secondary schools recorded and processed records.

In fact, the director of education referred to me as the "Cyber Rebel". I have aged, the pursuit of technological innovations has diminished. During the past term of regional council I often had to update my personal daybook calendar because it was not near the computer or BlackBerry when a meeting schedule was released.

This term of council starts off with a bang by almost eliminating paper and has begun a "paper light" initiative.

For a number of reasons, Niagara Region has abandoned the BlackBerry as the main communication device. Instead it has presented councillors and staff with several options of devices ranging from the Apple iPhone 5 to several Samsung Android devices. To date I am the only councillor that has opted for the Samsung Galaxy 5. It runs on the Android operating system and is soon to be updated by Google to the latest iteration known as Lollipop. I chose this device as I am somewhat

familiar with Android as I have had a Google Nexus 7 tablet for a year or so and it is already upgraded to Lollipop version 5.0.2. That is Part 1 of the technology learning curve.

The second part of the technology transition is that the office no longer provides laptops for the reviewing or management of meeting agendas, minutes or reports. Instead, all councillors have been provided an iPad Air tablet which operates over both WiFi and telephone networks. The connection with regional activities is through the internet such as Sheeps or through an application called Escribe. This application has tools that allow the user to cut and paste, highlight, add key words or use a tool in draw or make annotations on reports just like one would on a paper report. Gone are the hundreds of pages that had to be printed, collated and couriered to our homes. Gone is the excessive amount of paper to the grey box each week and gone is the clutter in my vehicle and office.

The third stage of technology change has arisen because of a great deal of high end laptops on the Shopping Channel in December. Because my former laptop may have returned to heaven, I decided to trade in my laptop and my wife's to a high-end Dell laptop, which brings in the need to learn Windows 8.1 and later this year

Windows 10.

It is my hope to update my election website to an ongoing basis for both my regional columns as well as the reports presented to Pelham town

council. Between the learning curves of Android version Lollipop, the Apple iOS and Windows 8.1 to 10 it is my hope to continue to inform the community of the programs and operations

of regional council. Be patient as I make the transition.

Brian Batty is the directly elected regional councillor for Pelham. E-mail: brian.batty@niagararegion.on.ca

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Ice fishing derby Sunday

The annual Binbrook Hard Water Crappie Derby is this Sunday.

The ice fishing event takes place 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Binbrook Conservation Area.

Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and Glenbrook Conservation Committee have been holding the derby for several years, with the number of participants between 300 and 400 people each year.

Prizes are to be won in both adult and youth categories and there will be entry prizes for people who get skunked. Derby prizes are awarded for crappie only.

Located on Lake Niapenco, Binbrook Conservation Area

opens its gates every winter for recreational ice fishing.

The lake has populations of northern pike, walleye, largemouth bass, small mouth bass, white and black crappie, yellow perch, pumpkinseed, rock bass, brown bullhead and carp.

Derby entry fees are \$30 for adults and \$15 for youth.

The entry fee includes a catered lunch.

They are available at www.npca.ca/conservation-areas/binbrook or at three tackle shops in Niagara: Erie Tackle Outfitters, 11 Killaly St., W., Port Colborne; Peter's Tackle, 22 Second Dr., St. Catharines; Grimsby Tackle, 515 Main St. W., Grimsby.



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LOCAL NEWS

■ RENEWABLE ENERGY

Shares for sale in solar co-op

ROB HOULE
QMI Agency Niagara

Elizabeth Chitty and Tung Trinh are in the solar-generation business.

While their involvement in renewable energy is on a small scale, they are part of a larger movement. The St. Catharines residents are bond holders in a co-op that pools money to build rooftop and small ground-mount installations to harness the power of the sun.

Chitty and Trinh are investors in SolarShare, a renewable energy co-op launched in 2011 that owns approximately \$30 million in solar assets. Chitty and Trinh are among the co-op's 750 members who have invested more than \$10 million in solar projects across the province, such as the solar panel installations above the Value Village building on Ontario St. in St. Catharines.

"Unfortunately, I don't have much money to invest,"

But any that I do, my criteria is that it be a triple-bottom-line one," Chitty said.

"Triple-bottom-line is an accounting framework that is social, environmental and financial. So in other words, instead of your commitments just from the point of view what it's going to make you, you think about the social and environmental returns as well."

"It's called the three P's — people, planet and profit. Those are the three pillars of sustainability."

Chitty said she bought a minimum \$1,000 SolarShare bond after receiving a small inheritance about three years ago. Over the five-year term, she will receive a fixed yearly 5% return on her investment, while bondholders paid out twice yearly. After five years, she has the option of withdrawing her investment.

SolarShare works like this. The not-for-profit co-opera-

ON THE WEB

For more information on TREC, go to www.trec.on.ca

For more information, including how to invest with SolarShare, go to www.solarbonds.ca

tive signs leases with building owners or landowners, installs solar panels on commercial rooftops or in fields and then sells bonds to environmentally conscious investors or those simply looking for a good return on investment.

The return on investment is paid from revenue from the electricity generated from the solar panels that is sold to the province under 20-year feed in tariff (FIT) contracts.

It's the type of investment sought out by Trinh.

"I'm really into ecological work, and like to invest in ethi-

cal stocks," Trinh said.

Investing in SolarShare was a no brainer, he said, so he bought \$5,000 in bonds approximately two years ago.

"I plan to invest more," Trinh said. "I wanted to make an initial investment and see how things are with the bonds. I plan to invest much more, because I find the 5% interest very attractive."

The solar panels atop the Welland Family Industries building on Ontario St. installed in November 2012, are hardly noticeable from street level. But up above Value Village and Cheetahs Tap and Grill are a plethora of solar panels tilted toward the south. The \$821,500 124-kilowatt St. Catharines project is expected to generate \$102,000 annually.

SolarShare was created by TREC Renewable Energy Co-operative, an incubator and developer of renewable energy co-operatives. TREC's



HANDOUT PHOTO

The SolarShare solar-panel project atop the Value Village building on Ontario St. in St. Catharines.

first co-operative was WindShare, whose 400 members share in the profits from the wind-generator at Exhibition Place in Toronto.

"We essentially use the co-op model to enable a lot of people to invest in renewable energy," said Judith Lipp, executive director of TREC and president of the Federation of Community Power Co-ops.

"Rather than have a corporation retain the profits — and it's not shared with the public — the co-op basically sells the investment to the general public ... and they get paid a return on that investment," Lipp said.

"Essentially, they become co-owners in the system."

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Walking Club - Everyone is welcome! – February 10 & 12

Interested in joining a Walking Club? Then join ours! Tuesdays at Pelham Arena from 9–10am and Thursdays at Fonthill Bandshell from 9–10:30am. For more information, please contact (905) 892-2607 ext. 329.

Arena Programs

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March 10	March 11	March 12

MONDAY, FEB 23	TUESDAY, FEB 24	WEDNESDAY, FEB 25
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Pelham Farmers' Market Vendor Applications – The Town of Pelham is currently accepting vendor applications for the 2015 Farmers' Market, which will run each Thursday from May until October. Vendor stalls are \$30.00/week or \$200.00/season. Application packages are available on pelham.ca and at Pelham Town Hall.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ POLITICS: Chambers of commerce selling tickets to Feb. 26 south Niagara affair

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It's a 6-pack mayors luncheon

GREG FURNIMINGER
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara's southern-tier mayors are expected to dish out news about the local economy when they're served up at a chambers of commerce luncheon on Feb. 26.

According to an invitation distributed this week by the chambers of Welland-Pelham, Port Colborne-Wainfleet, Niagara Falls and Greater Fort Erie, the mayors "will discuss new and useful economic and community-based information."

At this point, rookies Welland Mayor Frank Campion quipped that he's not exactly sure what to expect of the luncheon, or what exactly he and his counterpart will be saying.

"We're probably going to be talking about regional economic incentives," he said, but while adding the four chambers of commerce were to discuss a speaking plan for their Feb. 26 engagement in order to avoid each spouting off the same words.

Other newcomers to the south Niagara table are Port Colborne Mayor John Maloney and, back after an absence from the last seat, Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop.

Pelham Mayor Dave Aupperlee, Wainfleet Mayor Jeff Jeffs and Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati have also confirmed their attendance at the luncheon.

Dolores Fabiano, executive

director of all but the Fort Erie chamber of commerce, looks forward to having a "couple of new ones" at the table.

The most recent luncheon, normally held in the year's first quarter, was last March.

Previous term leaders then touched on the Pan Am Games and World Dragon Boat Championships both to be held in Welland in 2015; the east Fort Erie development plan that will see 180 hectares of land developed for commercial and residential use; construction of the Ontario North Spur highway; Fort Erie's move to the 400 hectares of economic gateway employment lands in Port Colborne; and the potential for Niagara to become a connection

between high-speed rail links being constructed in New York City and Toronto.

Fabiano said the past two luncheons, which could accommodate about 250 people both sold out.

The next mayor's luncheon will take place in the Fort Erie Leisureplex banquet hall, with seating also for about 250 people. Tickets are \$40 for chamber members or \$50 for others, including tax and tip.

Seats can be reserved by calling Greater Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce at 905-871-3803 or by e-mail at office@ferechamber.com. The event is sponsored by PenFinancial Credit Union with Grand Thornton accounting firm.

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COMMUNITY

Fighting words on poverty

DAN DAKIN
Niagara Poverty Reduction Network

Niagara Poverty Reduction Network wants to make its an election issue.

With a federal vote coming sometime before late October, the advocacy group wants candidates to put poverty high on their priority list.

"We're trying to figure out a strategy for what we need to look at in Niagara," said poverty network engagement chair Jennifer Pothier Saturday.

During a session held as part of the eighth annual Niagara Social Justice Forum at Brock University, Pothier said things like a federal minimum wage could make a positive difference on poverty in Niagara.

"We're just in the beginning of figuring where we want to go, but we know that housing is going to be important," she said. "It's not a partisan group in any way, it's to raise the issues and say, 'You don't have a national poverty strategy.'

The group also wants to push for improved employment insurance, easier tax filing and the return of the long-form census to collect better poverty-related data.

"Without that information, how can politicians make decisions that will help end poverty," co-chair Willy Nolles.

The network identified things like employment, child care, housing, health and public policy as factors that contribute to the problem.

A high school student at the session Saturday said what affects her most is what she hopes will keep her out of poverty in the future.

"You need to get an education to get out of poverty. But in order to go to university or college, you need money, so you have to get into debt to get out of it. It's a vicious cycle," said Maddie McNeil, a Grade 11 student from Beamsville.

She said she's working part-time to save because she expects to spend around \$20,000 a year on her post-secondary education.

McNeil said a good education doesn't guarantee work. The reality for many people in Niagara is they're either unemployed or are in minimum wage jobs.

"If you're making \$15 an hour, how is that going to help?" she said.

The poverty network estimates someone working a low-paying, full-time job would earn less than it costs to cover their monthly expenses.

Those poverty factors often lead to people turning to exploitative solutions like cash advances, pawnshops, rent-to-own stores and the drug and sex trades.

But Pothier said poverty also affects people not living in low-income situations.

The poverty network says that with much extra money every year, Niagara could build 1,200 new houses for those who need them, buy more than 600 buses for public transit or employ 5,000 people at \$55,000 a year jobs.

Jef Sinclair, the poverty network research and evaluation committee chair, said what needs to happen is to start fixing the problems before they happen rather than dealing with the repercussions.

"Instead of building more shelters, why don't we figure out how to keep people in their houses?" he said.

■ COMMUNITY: Facebook helps police, paramedics get to man considering suicide

Saved by social media

BILL SAWCHUK
 QM Agency Niagara

and paramedics to the man's home.

The 24-year-old was found and taken to hospital, where he is recovering.

"Facebook is this billion-member monster, and it has both positive and negative effects on people's lives," Gavin said.

"This is a case where the safety net did what it was supposed to do. They found something and moved it on quickly, and potentially saved a life."

Wednesday was Let's Talk day, a national campaign sponsored by Bell that aims to

"We were contacted by a Facebook employee from Facebook at about 7:30 pm about a male from St. Catharines who attempted to injure himself and posted the video to Facebook," said Const. Phil Gavin of the Niagara Regional Police. Police dispatched a cruiser.

SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES

If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide or is an imminent risk to themselves, phone 911.

For other crisis and distress situations

■ Distress Centre Niagara: www.distresscentreniagara.com

■ St. Catharines/Niagara Falls: 905-688-3711

■ Port Colborne/Welland: 905-734-1212

■ Beamsville/Grimbsy: 905-563-6674

■ Fort Erie: 905-382-0689

■ The distress centre is a 24-hour hotline for people who

are depressed, distressed or in crisis.

■ Kids Help Phone: www.kidshelpphone.ca 1-800-668-6868

■ Kids Help Phone is a 24-hour crisis hotline and website to connect young people to a counsellor.

■ Pathstone Mental Health crisis line for children and youths: www.pathstonementalhealth.ca, 1-800-263-4944

■ COAST(Crisis Outreach and Support Team): 1-866-550-5202

■ Mobile crisis intervention service providing immediate telephone counselling and, if necessary, on-site crisis intervention.

Facebook is this billion-member monster, and it has both positive and negative effects on people's lives.

Const. Phil Gavin

break the stigma surrounding mental illness and raise awareness.

Bell was contributing five cents for each text message sent, mobile and long distance call made, Facebook share and tweet using the #BellletsTalk hashtag.

Distress Centre Niagara director Stacy Terry said the 24-hour distress line receives upwards of 13,000 calls annually. About 12% are related to suicide.

"Posting a video online could be a sign of the person's ambivalence, but it is really a question for the individual to

answer," Terry said.

"It is so individual for every person. You can't just look at one person and say this."

Terry said there are outward signs that someone might be at risk of suicide, especially if they are behaving in a way that is new or out of character.

"One of the most important things to recognize is a change in someone," she said. "We don't always want to be looking for the person who is sad or depressed or distressed."

"Sometimes people will have a major change in their usual personality. They may normally be extroverted and they may not be doing the things they usually do."

"Or someone might not be a risk-taker, and now they are engaging in risk-taking behaviour. Someone might be giving away their possessions. Those are the types of things we should be looking for."

"At the very least, ask them the direct question about suicide. Then get other people involved and direct them to the right service."

Bill.Sawchuk@summedia.ca


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Informed Is In Style

Have you read the newspaper today?

Families urged to improve heart health

YMCA of Niagara and Niagara Health System want to inspire people to get fit together with the launch of the Niagara Families Healthy Heart Challenge.

As part of Heart Month, the YMCA's new initiative asks people to make a 30-day commitment to lower the risk of heart disease by participating in 30 minutes of physical activity together with their family at least three times a week.

To help encourage that activity, the YMCA will be offering free one-week Try My Y membership passes and the NHS will have a registered clinical exercise physiologist provide advice and monitor risk factors of heart disease.

In addition, Niagara Region Public Health will be offering free healthy eating seminars at YMCAs across the region.

Printable tracking calendars

with activity ideas, details on registering for healthy eating sessions and free passes to the YMCA are available at www.ymcaofniagara.org.

Participants who submit their progress at the end of the challenge, or post photos of their activities to social media using the hashtag #healthyheartsNiagara, have the chance to win a three-month family membership to the Y.

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■ PUBLIC SAFETY

City of Welland transfers wetland to NPCA

DAN DAVIN

QMI Agency Niagara

The City of Welland is handing over ownership of a large section of wetland to the region's conservation authority.

Both Welland city council and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority

board approved the transfer of 19 hectares (about 47 acres) that includes provincially significant wetlands located between Welland River north of Broadway and east of Riverside Dr.

NPCA spokesman Michael Reles said the plan is to build walking trails through non-sensitive sections of the

land. "A portion of that is designated as a wetland, and there's a large portion that is suitable for trails we can use and open for public use. That's the idea. To make it a passive area," he said.

"We still want the public to go and use the area. By putting in the trails, we're

able to keep them out of the more sensitive wetland areas."

A specific plan for the property will be set year but will likely feature trail or gravel paths and possibly a parking area, Reles said.

Welland Mayor Frank Campion said it makes sense for NPCA to own the land.

"We want to have that land protected, but there's a cost associated with doing that and that's not our business," he said. "So the best place for that land is with the NPCA, because that's what they do."

Campion said he's happy to hear the area will be improved for public use.

"They know how to maintain it and they know what they can put in and how to do it properly. If we were to do it, we would have been going through them to get the approvals anyway, so this is a direct pipeline," he said.

dan.davin@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @dandavinmedia

■ INDUSTRY

New GM Canada president tours St. Catharines plant

QMI Agency Niagara

The new president of GM Canada put some "boots on the ground" at the company's St. Catharines plant last Friday.

A month into his new job, Steve Carlisle toured the Gendale Ave. facility that assembles V6 and V8 engines. The 52-year-old president, who succeeded Kevin Williams, has spent his first month get-

ting reacquainted with the company's manufacturing plant all in Ontario.

The St. Catharines Powertrain plant provides engines for vehicles like the Silverado, Camaro, Tahoe and Cadillac CTS.

"It was very positive," he said during a brief sit-down. "As I was saying earlier to our group, it's an inspiring way to spend a Friday."

"You can't walk away without being really motivated by the level of commitment to winning and the collaborative spirit," he said.

With about 2,000 employees, the plant's Gen-5 engines powers the company's new Escalade and SUVs.

Unlike Oshawa, where the future of the aging assembly operations is still uncertain, the St. Catharines plant

recently hired 170 new employees and offered its summer student program last year for the first time in 20 years, with 170 students at about 800,000 hours per year.

"We're really excited where we are right now with all three of our products," plant manager Carolynne Waits said. "We've got a really skilled and engaged workforce."

Carlisle was impressed by

the mix of new and experienced staff.

"You see the interaction among the experienced workforce and the students to shoulder with the new hires who are absorbing all that and taking it to a whole other level. It was really cool."

"This is really the pinnacle of manufacturing, this kind of plant," added David Paterson, vice-president of corporate

affairs. "You get more things coming together in one place and being done to precision."

Born in Woodstock, Carlisle, 46, graduated from Brock in 1982 as a co-op student at the now-closed Oshawa truck assembly plant. After making the rounds in January, he intends to tackle GM's short-term goal — improving market share. In Canada, GM has slipped to third in sales.

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■ SWEET TREAT

For the love of wine and chocolate

BOB TYMCZYSZYN
QMI Agency Niagara

For people with a sweet tooth and love of wine, February could be the most wonderful time of year.

For four weekends in February, beginning Feb. 6, guests will be able to sample sweet and savoury along with vintages at 26 wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake during the Days of Wine and Chocolate.

For \$35 plus tax you can go and visit all the wineries and sample chocolate-inspired treats paired with a specific wine.

"I think they will be very surprised," said Michelle Bosc, director of marketing for Chateau des Charmes and chair of Wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"Most people think of chocolate as sweet and dessert but it doesn't have to be."

Bosc gave an example of pulled pork with a chocolate mole sauce.

"We really take the time to focus on the pairing," she said.

At Chateau des Charmes enthusiasts will be pairing a Cabernet Franc with a spiced biscuit flavoured with chocolate and cayenne.

"Your pass is good until



BOB TYMCZYSZYN / QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Hank Hunse, owner of Small Talk Winery where they will be participating in the Days of Wine and Chocolate event for four weekends in February, beginning Feb. 6.

"you've hit every winery," said Bosc. "You can pop in Friday or Saturday or Sunday and try whatever you like and next weekend do it all over again."

For this year organizers have done away with paper-based passes. Visitors are directed from the Wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake website to purchase an electronic ticket which is then e-mailed so you can take it with you all weekend.

Small Talk Vineyards owner Hank Hunse suggested people don't visit more than five wineries in a day. "Don't rush. You can

visit as many as you want," said Bosc. "It's an opportunity to sample some of the other wines besides the pairings."

Small Talk will be showcasing white chocolate covered and Reising一线wine cocktail.

"It's a great time to visit wine country," said Bosc. "The winemakers are busy at this time in the cellars, but you will still get lots of attention from staff."

For more information on the event visit <http://www.smalltalkniagarawine.com>

bob.tymczyszyn@summeida.ca

■ BUSINESS: Court documents show company owes \$5 billion

Creditors taking aim at Target

DAN DAKIN
QMI Agency Niagara

Three Niagara companies are among the hundreds of creditors owed money from Target Canada.

When Target announced it was going for bankruptcy protection, it listed 132 companies in Canada it put into question billions of dollars owed to companies both across the country and around the world.

A list of creditors was posted online by Alvarez and Marshall, the Toronto-based monitor for Target Canada's court proceedings. The list has more than 800 creditors on it, with more than \$3 billion owing. Three Niagara companies on the list are owed a total of nearly \$30,000 while Hamilton-based Horizon Utilities, which handles hydro services in St. Catharines, is owed more than \$77,000.

"No one on that list is going to see their money. That's just the reality of what's going to happen," said Marko Bukovec, the general manager of Methamol Company of Canada, which has its headquarters on Hanover Dr. in St. Catharines.

The company makes personal care products like Oxyacne cream and Deep Relief pain reliever lotions. It's owed \$4,800, but Bukovec said that number could have been much higher.

"We were lucky because they had just wired us money the week before," he said.

The two other Niagara companies on

the list are a numbered company based at a private residence in St. Catharines that's owed \$11,480 and Noor Pharma Ltd., also based in St. Catharines, which is owed \$1,354.

Just over the border, Buffalo-based companies Buffalo Games, Umbra LLC and Robinson Home Products are owed a total of \$40,150. While there are a handful of municipalities on the list, including the City of Barrie that's owed more than \$193,000, none of the municipalities in Niagara are on it.

Neither the Pen Centre or Seaway Mall are the list and both confirmed Tuesday they're not owed any money.

"When Target filed (for credit protection) they did

not owe us any money. Their rent was paid in full," said Seaway Mall president Mike Woodward.

Pen Centre marketing director Rick Woodward said the massive renovation projects to convert former Zellers and Walmart locations into Target locations into

paid for the corporation. "They invested those dollars in that building. That was their project not ours," he said.

Each store was estimated to have cost more than \$10 million to open.

Bukovec, whose company had a nationwide distribution deal with Target Canada, said he noticed issues early after its 2012 launch.

"We had been giving them product samples and we thought they would do for units per week," he said. "You knew right off the bat it wasn't happening."

"I don't think anyone thought closing the doors this fast was going to happen, but they had to do something."

dan.dakin@summeida.ca



TARGET

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LOCAL NEWS

FUNDRAISER

A 24-hour spin for the cancer society

DON FRASER
QMI Agency Niagara

Sara Byers' ride to fitness began six years ago with a goal to shed pounds.

"I got hooked on spin classes, and at the same time we entered a team in the Ride to Conquer Cancer," said Byers, 36, who is a museum curator.

On the day of that ride, she found out her mother had cancer, a battle her mom is winning.

"Things just coincided," said Byers, a St. Catharines resident who has since become a Canadian medal-winning indoor track cyclist.

"And this spin-a-thon is great, as you can do something positive and work through things in events like

this. It's a great atmosphere, everyone is working at this together, encouraging each other."

"You feed off of each other's energy."

Byers was part of a 24-hour stationary bike team relay spin-a-thon for the Canadian Cancer Society's Niagara office that ended Sunday at noon.

The third annual Battle in the Saddle was organized by Energy Fitness Studio and took place inside the St. Catharines' Holiday Inn.

"We have some people that have ridden over 12 hours, so they're starting to hurt a little bit," said Brad Anderson, event coordinator and general manager at Energy Fitness Studio.



Don Fraser/QMI Agency Niagara
The final hours of a 24-hour stationary bike team relay spinathon for the Canadian Cancer Society's Niagara office, which ended Sunday at noon. The third annual Battle in the Saddle was organized by Energy Fitness Studio and took place inside the St. Catharines Holiday Inn.

"But the toughest point is probably between 3 and 6 a.m.," he said. "It's when you get into the mind-bender

stuff. It's pitch black outside and your body tells you it should be sleeping."

"One the sun comes up, you

known the end is coming." Teams can have up to 10 riders, who decide among themselves how to divvy up

the hours in relay fashion. Someone must be spinning at all times, and the group is motivated by a spin instructor and pumping music.

The 126 participants also get free food, water and a meal at the annual hotel room.

Close to \$25,000 was raised, with the M&M team of Mario Elrick and Matt Steele leading the pack at \$1,040.

"Sore, so sore," said Elrick, between deep breaths and sweat wipes, at hour 22. "You just struggle through it. It's endurance and perseverance."

"And you know you're here for a very good cause. Everyone's been touched by cancer."

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